

# EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY

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## Evangelical Review of Theology

*A digest of articles and book reviews selected from  
publications worldwide for an international  
readership, interpreting the Christian Faith for  
contemporary living.*

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(2) Much of the human behaviour is guided by shared values that people voluntarily follow.

(3) Also, much human behaviour is guided by a set of norms and beliefs that people follow under the threat of punishment or promise of reward.

(4) One important part of the social system is organizations. People work together in organizations to achieve specific goals.

(5) Another important part of the social system is groups. People come together informally—some to strengthen their common values, some to strengthen their emotional identification. [p. 150](#)

(6) Organizations and groups have many positions that people fill. Positions are more formal in organizations than in groups.

(7) The unique way a person fills a position is his role. People play roles differently depending on other people's expectations and on their own attitudes, personalities, and life experiences.

(8) Another important part of the social system is social aggregates.

(9) Two types of force tend to shape organizations and social aggregates. Some forces lead to stability and regularity. Other forces lead to tension and strain.

(10) Values, norms, beliefs, organizations, groups, positions, roles and social aggregates influence human behaviour and the make-up of the social system resulting in support or modification.

From such a list of fundamental ideas, a course or curriculum is built up in orderly progression, but with a constant return to these basic concepts. [p. 151](#)

## The Obedience-Oriented Curriculum

*by* GEORGE PATTERSON

THE MANY unreached villages in northern Honduras compel church planting activity which normally lies outside the scope of a Bible School curriculum. But our extension Bible Institute, modified for in-service training among the poorly educated, proved to be an efficient tool for establishing new churches. We train some men as church planters, and they train the village men as lay pastors. Our regularly trained pastors shunned the backward villages. And if they did go, they produced little fruit. Nevertheless, the uneducated *campesinos* (peasant farmers) are a distinct people, whom Christ orders us to disciple. It was either disobey the Great Commission in this area or license these poorly educated *campesinos* to pastor their own people. We chose to obey. Some of our graduate pastors broke with us in reaction to this 'modernism'.

The obedience-orientation is not a method. It is an approach, a way of thinking and acting. It applies to the residential seminary, the extension institute, or the local church. If we start with absolute obedience to Christ and follow through without regard for the perpetuation of tradition, we arrive at the following requirement for theological education:

1. *Practical work must be done in a local church situation, in immediate obedience to Christ.*

Many institutions now require practical work to supplement the subjects taught. They reinforce doctrine and theory with field assignments. This requires more obedience, but

is still a doctrine-oriented course. Why not start with the practical work, then add the necessary doctrine to enable one to do it? The course is now activity-oriented, but not necessarily obedience-oriented. We define it further, to assure that the activities are done in obedience to Christ.

*2. All practical assignments are done in direct obedience to Christ, not in obedience to the professor.*

This usually solves any problem of lack of motivation. We must [p. 152](#) start, not with a 'Christian service assignment', but with the commands of Christ. We apply them to our own area and come up with a strategic plan. As we think of Christ's orders for us, the backbone of a new curriculum emerges. To obey him, our curriculum must fulfil definite objectives. Our general objective is to start new churches. Our immediate objective is to train Jim Brown to start a new church on Seventeenth Avenue. Our curriculum requires weekly, monthly or yearly objectives to be stated with names, places and activities. But we still have only an obedience-initiated curriculum. To be obedience-oriented we must move further.

*3. The teacher must communicate continually with the pastors in the field.*

What the student continues to study and do corresponds to the needs which arise in his field of responsibility. Essential elements of doctrine, Bible and history are introduced into the programme where they contribute best. The co-ordination requires communication. Church-planters on the growing fringe help to shape the immediate objectives of the curriculum. Experienced pastors who know what steps must be taken next, also guide those who train the workers. A professional educator designs the broad course of study and defines its unchangeable Biblical goals. But he maintains flexibility. He allows the continuous shaping of the course for each individual student according to the needs and progress of his congregation.

A completely autonomous seminary can hardly have an obedience-oriented curriculum. Ideally, each church would serve as a pastor training centre, in collaboration with a residential or extension seminary.

*4. The unchangeable Church doctrines must be taught along with their corresponding Christian duties.*

Truth does not change. But it was not meant to be partitioned into separate academic subjects. It was meant to be obeyed ([James 1:22](#)). We have not given theory and doctrine a lower place. On the contrary, with proper communication between pastor and teacher, we find where the doctrine fits into our work. Abstract theology, history and Bible content take on a surprising new importance. The student worker devours his studies with an eagerness seldom found in a traditional institution. [p. 153](#)

In order to teach doctrine and duty as one, we need a 'vertical' treatment of doctrine. We begin with God as the source of all truth and authority. His attributes find expression in the eternal decrees of God the Father. These decrees are wrought within creation by God the Son, whose work is applied to man by the Holy Spirit. Man responds in obedience. We start with God and end with man. The intermediate steps make up the content of a doctrinal study. A 'horizontal' approach to doctrine does not necessarily begin with God nor end with man's duty. Like scholasticism, it groups doctrinal truths in parallel or horizontal categories, comparing similar ideas. The Bible never systematizes doctrine in this talmudic manner.

Normally, the Honduras Extension Bible Institute does not enrol single young men. There is no rule against it. They simply do not adjust to this practical approach to doctrine. With some happy exceptions, most of them care only to study or teach theory; they lack

the maturity and respect of their community to do pastoral work and they often study primarily for material gain. They are instructed but one of the older extension students teaches them in a separate class.

*5. An obedience-oriented theology must recognize the spontaneous development of Christ's Church, under his sole command.*

Like all living things, a normal, healthy church must grow and multiply. That is her very nature. The obedience-oriented curriculum keeps in touch with the changing activities of a growing organism. The traditional curriculum leaves a man unprepared for participation in a widespread, spontaneous movement for Christ; his institutional mentality will hinder it. In Honduras we observed the two types of curriculum in a controlled 'laboratory' situation. Isolated from most outside influences, the villages churches were almost entirely dependent for their religious education upon the efforts of our mission. We could control the theological input. We observed churches whose only input came from each kind of curriculum; some churches received a combination of both educational influences. The obedience-oriented churches all grew, multiplied, maintained discipline and showed discernment in doctrine. The churches with the traditional, doctrinally-oriented education did not grow at all except through the efforts of outside agencies. Although they knew more Biblical content, they suffered from [p. 154](#) doctrinal error, lacked initiative, and caused problems continually. Churches influenced by both orientations did well when they gave priority to obedience. Otherwise, they did poorly.

For education to contribute to a spontaneous growth, the element of self-multiplication must be part of the curriculum. Every pastor simply trains a 'Timothy' with or without the help of a theological institution. This 'Timothy' in turn, quickly begins to train his own 'Timothy' ([II Timothy 2:2](#)). Every student becomes a student worker and a student teacher. By this process churches multiply rapidly, as does the number of Christian workers.

*6. Educational objectives must be realistic.*

We missionary educators are notoriously impractical dreamers. We confuse faith with wishful thinking. Objectives are not wishes, but plans. The obedience-oriented curriculum starts not with humanly inspired objectives, but with Christ's commands applied to the clear needs of a given field of responsibility. We will abandon educational projects which fall short, regardless of how much money and time has already been invested. We gear our courses to those who receive Christ and present themselves to the church for service. We put them to work immediately. Their educational experience must *follow* their church experience, and move along with it. It is a crime to commit an unproven man to several years of study for the pastorate when neither he nor the church knows if that is God's gift for him. The gift can be discerned only as one practises it in a local church situation. To assume that three years' study will automatically make a man a pastor denies the Biblical doctrine of gifts. Does the obedience-oriented curriculum confuse educational objectives with pastoral or evangelistic objectives? Yes—intentionally! They reinforce each other.

*7. The theological institution, residential or extension, formal or informal, must hold a regular 'practical work class'.*

The student must participate, from the beginning, in a class which deals with his practical work in some church. The teacher helps his students apply everything they learn; he supervises their Christian work. Continued study should depend on weekly fulfilment of this practical work. *Everything* taught should contribute to the student's successful weekly ministry. No professor can honestly say he teaches well unless his

students carry on a fruitful ministry. p. 155 The practical class does not train students for the future; it relates to a present pastoral experience.

This practical work class (which in TEE would correspond to the regular seminar) begins with detailed reports by each student on his field work. The class is limited to a maximum of five. The teacher gives each student special studies or counsel to meet the needs of his congregation. In a residential seminary these studies may be arranged with the professor of some related subject. The teacher files a list of these needs; they help in preparing textbooks and foreseeing problems.

In a residential school, each professor would ideally teach at least one practical work class, though only if they are experienced pastors. Only a few may therefore qualify and time may not allow so few to hold so many sessions. In this case students can form *teams*, each with a senior year captain. The professor teaches only these captains who then hold practical work classes for their own teams.

Some system is needed to verify each student's progress in practical activities. A checklist should depict each activity he must stage to raise up a church, edify the members, deal with problems and obey all that the New Testament requires of the Christian worker. This checklist resembles a history of a church as it grows from infancy to maturity. It mentions 'congregational' activities more than pastoral duties. When he begins his course the student worker, though not yet called 'pastor', begins to teach and lead a congregation, taking on more and more responsibility. Our primary aim is not to educate a man but to help a church grow.

The practical work class requires a Paul-Timothy relationship. The pastor teaches by his example; the student learns by imitation. The teacher in this relationship uses only methods the student can imitate; he uses only equipment available to his student. The teacher shares the responsibility for the effective, weekly ministry of his student. If his student fails, he fails. The proof of his effective teaching is the growth of the student's congregation, and this is the test of the student's success too, rather than the ability to pass an examination.

The Honduras Extension Bible Institute now offers *only* practical work classes. For each student there is a Register of Progress for his congregation. It lists 35 activities for which he must mobilize his congregation, and each requires several weekly studies. Each weekly study is a unit which, in one small booklet, combines theory p. 156 with a practical work assignment. These booklets are pocket-sized, for carrying and reading during the week. There are no long courses in Bible history, doctrine, etc. Each unit combines elements from these different areas. Some are strictly Bible studies; others combine elements of history, theology, Bible and homiletics all in one brief unit. These latter are usually the most effective.

#### 8. *Modifications in self-study materials are required.*

Regular textbooks were too ponderous for our *campesinos*. They will read no more than they can cover in an hour or two a week. Maximum condensation is called for. Normally, to cover all our objectives, we would need 1,000 such booklets! But we did not write one booklet to each objective. We laid our objectives on a two-axis graph with objectives on one axis and proposed texts on the other, after careful study to determine how to meet several objectives in one booklet.

Our booklets are dramatically written, and illustrated wherever possible. We vary the techniques, for example:

—Narrative—Comic-book format—Swift-moving programming.—Poetry and ballads—Other attention-holders, such as graphic outlines, diagrams, or provocative questions—anything to avoid the cold 1-2-3 logic of our university-trained teachers! The *campesino*

rarely thinks in the abstract. He reasons in terms of experience, people, animals and situations. We must *move* him.

In our textbooks, we use an uncomplicated style, without 'writing down'. We stick to a single theme, even though we may be meeting several objectives. And we make the material easy to apply.

Because of the modular format of these units, with each a self-contained entity, the order of their presentation can be varied according to the needs of the student and his congregation, even though there is a suggested order of progression. Real flexibility in the rate of progress is also possible.

Still other weekly study booklets treat definite congregational needs which may arise. An index entitled 'Needs and Remedies' accompanies the register of church progress. This index shows what special studies to give a student with a specific need. Over the years the same problems occur but not in the same order. A pattern, nevertheless, has emerged to enable us to foresee and deal with most of the problems of a new pastor. Dealing with needs as they arise guarantees maximum learning by the student, with a Biblical- p. 157 historical-doctrinal-pastoral treatment of the church's immediate needs.

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**Mr. Patterson is based in Honduras with the Conservative Baptist Mission.**

## Journal Survey

### **Themelios**

The last year's issues of this international journal, which is published three times a year jointly by the British Theological Students Fellowship and the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, include the following topics:

*Hermeneutics and Biblical Authority*—James Packer

*Inerrancy and New Testament Exegesis*—R. T. France

*Preaching from the Patriarchs*—Robert P. Gordon The poor man's Gospel—Peter Davids

*\*The meaning of man in the debate between Christianity and Marxism*—Andrew Kirk

*Resurrection and immortality: eight theses*—Murray Harris

*Nairobi 1975: a crisis of faith for the WCC*—Bruce J. Nicholls

*Orthodoxy and heresy in earlier Christianity*—I. Howard Marshall

*Why were the Montanists condemned?*—David F. Wright

Subscription for 1 year (incl. postage): £1.20, US \$3.00 Sfr, 7.50, DM 7.00, f 9.00.

Orders for addresses in British Isles to: TSF, 38 De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GP, U.K.

North American orders to: TSF, 233 Langdon, Madison, Wisconsin 53703, U.S.A.

Orders in Holland to: Administratie Themelios—Nederland, c/o Rijksweg 28, Baambrugge post Abcoude, Netherlands (postgiro transfer account 3230814).

All other orders to: Themelios, IFES, 10 College Road, Harrow, HA1 1BE, Middlesex, U.K.

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### **Theological Fraternity Bulletin**

Published by the Latin American Theological Fraternity each quarter. The 1976 issues featured:

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\* Reviewed elsewhere in this issue.



*The Kingdom of God and the Church*—C. Renè Padilla

*Beyond Capitalism and Marxism: Dialogue with a Dialogue*—Andrew Kirk

*The Subject of Abortion in Theological Perspective*—Dr. B.M. Couch

*Our Mission and Church Growth: Towards a Missiology of Masses and Minority Groups*—Orlando E. Costas

Subscription for 1 year: US\$ 5.00, £2.25.

Orders to: LATF, Casilla 25, Suc. 24, Buenos Aires, C.F., Argentina. [p. 159](#)

## Book Reviews

### BIBLICAL EXEGESIS IN THE APOSTOLIC PERIOD

BY RICHARD N. LONGENECKER

(Eerdmans, 1975. Pp. 246, \$ 4.95.)

Reviewed by ROBIN NIXON.

Reprinted from *Themelios* (September 1976) with permission.

PERHAPS the greatest challenge facing theology today is the hermeneutical one. In an ecumenical age, when everyone has to take notice of how other people do their theology, it becomes apparent that in many cases what divides us is the way in which we interpret and apply the teaching of the Bible both in the construction of systematic theology and in the approach to practical problems of ministry, worship and ethics. 'The Use of the Bible' has now become a paper for Anglican students in the General Ordination Examination. But behind this lies not simply the old 'principles of interpretation' (the grammatico-historical approach and all the rest), but also the new more sophisticated study of hermeneutics which has been developed in Germany and which people like Tony Thiselton are trying to introduce particularly to evangelical circles in this country. If the subject is so vital and affects us at so many levels, including of course our preaching, then any careful study of the approach to Scripture by the Biblical writers themselves must have an important part to play in the exercise. In the nature of the case such a study will normally be of the way in which the writers of the New Testament used the writings of the Old Testament. We are most grateful therefore to Professor Longenecker, who holds the chair of New Testament at Wycliffe College, Toronto, for providing us with an up-to-date and definitive survey written from the conservative point of view. It is a book which most theological students would be well advised to buy and it is to be hoped that there will soon be a British edition.

Dr. Longenecker begins by making the important point that [p. 160](#) 'historically, differences between Judaism and Christianity can in large measure be traced back to and understood in light of differing exegetical presuppositions and practices'. After noting that 'the evidence relating to first-century Jewish and Christian exegetical procedures is both voluminous and partial', he presses into his first chapter on 'Jewish Hermeneutics in the First Century'. The four main sources of information are the writings of the rabbis, the apocalyptists, and the sectaries of Qumran and Philo. From these he shows that Pharisaic scribes particularly developed midrashic exegesis, the Qumran covenanters *peshar* exegesis and Philo allegorical exegesis.